



## SPRING CREEK WATERSHED COMMUNITY

*A grassroots stakeholder initiative*

### Coordinating Committee Meeting Summary: Tuesday, September 15, 2009

Attendance: Bryce Taylor, Bob Carline, Barbara Fisher, Jim Gazza, Ann Donovan, Rob Cooper, Paul Bartley, Todd Giddings, Brianna Hutchison, Bob Eberhart, Bob Donaldson, Katie Ombalski, Bill Sharp, Pam Adams, Susan Buda, Denice Wardrop

#### **Guest Speaker: McCoy-Linn Dam Removal and Spring Creek Restoration Project (Katie Ombalski, ClearWater Conservancy)**

The McCoy-Linn Dam was a 12 foot high structure that created a 5 acre impoundment on the mainstem of Spring Creek between Bellefonte and Milesburg. The first dam to be built on this site was constructed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of Andrew Carnegie's Harmony Forge-Milesburg Ironworks, one of the region's first iron forges. The McCoy-Linn Dam was constructed in the 1920s for the purpose of producing hydropower but was decommissioned in the 1950s after West Penn Power ceased operations at the site. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) currently owns the dam site and 25 surrounding acres of undeveloped land.

The PFBC has been interested in removing the dam since it acquired the property in the early 1980s, but the project was not set in motion until the early 2000s when dam removal began to gain momentum as a stream restoration technique. ClearWater Conservancy signed on to act as project manager on behalf of the PFBC. Partnership development and procurement of funds began in 2004. Sediment samples were also taken and analyzed in 2004 to ensure that the sediment accumulated upstream of the dam over the decades of its operation met clean fill standards.

As with most dam removals, one of the biggest challenges to the McCoy-Linn Dam removal was public perception of the project. Many community residents were opposed to removing the dam because of their fear of increased flooding downstream, the perceived loss of fishing opportunities, and the structure's identity as a local historic landmark. The project partners sponsored a series of public meetings in 2006 to assuage these fears, promote understanding, and garner support for the project by educating the community about the expected benefits of dam removal. In addition to the public meetings, the partners launched an aggressive outreach campaign with frequent media coverage and project updates on the ClearWater Conservancy website.

The McCoy-Linn Dam was removed in August and September 2007. ClearWater Conservancy staff monitored water quality during the removal of the dam and found that the effects of dam removal were similar to normal storm flow conditions. No significant deposition of sediment occurred at the confluence of Spring Creek and Bald Eagle Creek as a result of dam removal. Project partners consulted with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission to ensure that the historic value of the site was not only preserved by the project but enhanced by it. Work began on a public fishing/boating access area in the spring of 2008 with plans to add interpretative panels highlighting historic features in late 2009/early 2010.

There are a number of ongoing monitoring efforts associated with the Mc-Coy Linn Dam Removal Project. The PFBC and Penn State University conducted pre-removal surveys of the trout and macroinvertebrate populations at, above, and below the dam site in 2006 and 2007. Post-removal fish and macroinvertebrate surveys began in the summer of 2008 and are scheduled to continue for several years.

Preliminary results of the trout surveys show a 3-fold increase in trout biomass in the area of the former impoundment following removal of the dam. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) conducts annual redd (trout nest) counts in the fall to assess trout reproduction in Spring Creek. The Penn State Center for Watershed Stewardship conducted a pre-removal survey of the flora at the dam site and concluded that the plant community was typical of floodplain wetlands. The Center plans to complete a post-removal study at some point in the future after riparian restoration is complete. Finally, ClearWater Conservancy staff monitor stream flow, temperature, and water quality at the former dam site as part of the Spring Creek Watershed Community's Water Resources Monitoring Project.

Instream enhancement and bank stabilization was completed in August 2009. Fish habitat structures, including log and rock deflectors and root wads were installed in the former impoundment. The stream channel, which became very narrow and deep following dam removal, was stabilized by widening the channel and creating a floodplain bench. The stream banks were stabilized through the installation of a number of rock cross vanes. A large gravel bar that had formed in the middle of the channel immediately downstream of the dam site was also removed. In addition to these instream habitat improvements, ClearWater Conservancy plans to plant a riparian buffer along the stream in the fall of 2009.

### **A New Name for the Spring Creek Watershed Community**

The Spring Creek Watershed Commission requested that the Spring Creek Watershed Community change its name to reduce confusion between the groups amongst local residents. Mr. Giddings noted that the name of the Community also produces confusion when representatives of the group attend workshops or meetings because the name does not readily imply the group's purpose.

Mr. Eberhart, Mr. Giddings, and Mr. Bartley met to choose appropriate possibilities from the list of 14 names provided by the Community and came up with the following five options:

1. Friends of the Spring Creek Watershed
2. Spring Creek Watershed Association
3. Spring Creek (Watershed) Citizen's Council
4. Partners for the Spring Creek Watershed
5. Spring Creek Watershed Alliance

Mr. Eberhart asked for comments prior to calling a vote. Mr. Donaldson noted that there is already a Spring Creek Watershed Alliance, so this name was removed from the list. It was decided that Partners for the Spring Creek Watershed was too vague and that the Spring Creek Watershed Citizen's Council did not accurately describe the group's function so these names were also removed. Mr. Giddings spoke in favor of Spring Creek Watershed Association because this name carries a certain connotation that is already understood by many people. Ms. Buda asked if the Community functions like a true watershed association. Ms. Donovan replied that all watershed associations are different because each watershed has a different suite of issues, although most operate either as 501(c)3 organizations or are supported by a municipality. Mr. Eberhart called a vote. There were 11 votes for Friends of the Spring Creek Watershed and 3 votes for Spring Creek Watershed Association.

Ms. Ombalski asked the three individuals who voted for Spring Creek Watershed Association to share their thoughts. Mr. Giddings felt that Friends of the Spring Creek Watershed was too vague. Mr. Bartley agreed with Mr. Giddings and said that the term "association" was a familiar trigger word that would clue people in to what the group is about. Mr. Sharp said that he preferred Spring Creek Watershed Association for the reasons put forth by Mr. Giddings and Mr. Bartley, but suggested that if the group goes with Friends of the Spring Creek Watershed it could reduce confusion by coming up with a descriptive tagline/brief mission statement. Mr. Taylor suggested that the group could also produce a handout or brochure for representatives to take with them that describes the group. Ms. Donovan said that the Community has evolved into a watershed association over time and perhaps this title would be more appropriate. Ms. Donovan offered to search for watershed associations on the internet to see what

kind of names are most commonly used and how these groups' mission statements are worded. Bob Donaldson made a motion to table the matter of choosing a new name for the Community until the next meeting to allow for further deliberation. Mr. Giddings seconded this motion. There was no opposition.

### **Spring Creek Watershed Sustainability Initiative**

#### *The Model Water Well/Geothermal Borehole Ordinance (Todd Giddings)*

The model water well/geothermal borehole ordinance committee completed a first draft of the ordinance and is working on revising this draft.

#### *The Spring Creek Watershed Map (Brianna Hutchison)*

Ms. Hutchison reported that the Watershed Map committee failed to meet its self-imposed deadline of having the map completed in time for ClearWater Conservancy's Spring Creek Day. The committee will hold one final meeting at the end of September to discuss final changes to the map.

#### *Identification of Critical Water Recharge Areas (Bob Carline)*

The Water Resources Monitoring Committee (WRMC) made an effort to identify critical water recharge areas within the Spring Creek Watershed several years ago; however, this coarse-scale effort likely overestimated these areas. At the August meeting of the WRMC, it was suggested that the previous effort could be further refined using the forthcoming USGS surface/groundwater model for the Spring Creek Watershed. The WRMC agreed that this is an important project and recommended that it be pursued after the USGS model becomes available.

#### *Response to Suggestions from Commission*

The Commission asked the Community for advice regarding the establishment of a watershed-wide stormwater authority and the revision of the Act 167 Stormwater Ordinance. Mr. Eberhart stated that he did not detect a large amount of enthusiasm amongst the Commissioners for the establishment of a stormwater authority. There were no comments. Regarding the Act 167, Mr. Eberhart indicated that it is well-known that Penn State is opposed to such a revision. Mr. Donaldson suggested that the Community ask a Penn State representative, such as Larry Fennessey, to come to the Commission meeting and discuss the University's position.

#### *Suggestions for New Projects*

Ms. Fisher suggested that the Sustainability Initiative collect caps from plastic bottles to be sent out for recycling. Ms. Adams has already looked into Easterly Parkway Elementary and the Friends School as possible drop-off locations. Mr. Taylor suggested that the SI contact the local Boy Scouts to see if they have such a project. Mr. Eberhart asked Ms. Fisher to gather more information about this potential project so that the Community could discuss it at the October meeting.

### **Other Matters to Come Before the Committee**

#### *State Water Plan Update (Todd Giddings)*

The regional technical committee for the Upper Middle Susquehanna has a public meeting scheduled for Wednesday, September 16, from 10:00am – 12:00pm at the Centre County Solid Waste Authority. The purpose of this meeting will be to vote on the committee's nomination for critical water planning areas

within the region. Critical water planning area designations are based on threats to water quality and quantity. The Spring Creek Watershed qualifies for this designation on both counts and the committee previously ranked the watershed #1 out of their three choices for the region. Watersheds designated as critical water planning areas will receive technical support from agencies like USGS and the Susquehanna River Basin Commission and funding. Mr. Giddings made a motion that the Community publicly support the nomination of the Spring Creek Watershed as a critical water planning area. Ms. Buda seconded the motion. Mr. Cooper voiced opposition, stating that previous studies backing this designation had been proven unsound. Mr. Giddings replied that a public meeting was held after the studies in question were published to address negative reactions and that the findings of the studies were upheld. There was no further opposition and the motion carried.

#### *ClearWater Conservancy's Spring Creek Day*

Mr. Eberhart stated that the Community will have a booth at Spring Creek Day, which is scheduled to take place from noon – 5:00pm at Millbrook Marsh Nature Center on Sunday, October 5<sup>th</sup>. He indicated that the Community's display needs to be reworked to include information about the Sustainability Initiative. No one volunteered to work on the display.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 20, 2009, 7:30am at the Patton Township Building**